

Message Text

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PAGE 01 USBERL 01505 01 OF 02 231442Z
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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
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USNMR SHAPE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 1505

USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, BQG, UR
SUBJECT: SCHMIDT/GROMYKO DISCUSSIONS ON ELBE RIVER BOUNDARY
AND BERLIN TERRITORIAL EXCHANGES

REF: BONN 09188 DTG 191236Z MAY 78

SUMMARY: SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO, WHO HAS ONE OF THE
LONGER MEMORIES AROUND ON THE BERLIN SITUATION, RECENTLY
COMMENTED ELLIPTICALLY IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT
ON AN EXCHANGE OF TERRITORY IN THE BERLIN AREA. WE OFFER BELOW
OUR RECOLLECTIONS OF SEVERAL TERRITORIAL EXCHANGES FROM THE
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PAGE 02 USBERL 01505 01 OF 02 231442Z

1940'S WHICH MAY HAVE SOME RELEVANCE TO THE ELBE RIVER BOUNDARY
DISPUTE WHICH SCHMIDT AND GROMYKO WERE DISCUSSING. END
SUMMARY.

1. WE NOTED IN REFTTEL THAT DURING DISCUSSION OF FRG/
GDR NEGOTIATIONS ON ELBE RIVER BOUNDARY, GROMYKO
ALLUDED TO "AN EXCHANGE OF TERRITORY" WHICH BROUGHT

ABOUT THE SITUATION "AROUND WEST BERLIN." GROMYKO ADDED "WHO HAD GIVEN WHAT TO WHOM COULD NOT BE DETERMINED." ON FIRST READING THIS ALLUSION SEEMED TO BE A REVIVAL OF THE OLD SOVIET THEME THAT THE WESTERN POWERS WERE GIVEN A PORTION OF BERLIN BY THE SOVIET UNION IN THE JUNE 29, 1945 CONFERENCE AMONG THE GENERALS IN CHARGE OF THE ALLIED ARMIES IN CENTRAL GERMANY (CLAY-WEEKS-ZHUKOV MEETING). AT THAT TIME THE THREE GENERALS MADE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REPOSITIONING OF TROOPS WHO AT THE TIME STOOD ALONG CEASE-FIRE LINES WHICH DID NOT COINCIDE WITH THE PREVIOUSLY AGREED ZONAL BOUNDARIES OF GERMANY. ALSO AGREED AT THIS MEETING WAS THE TIMING AND TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ANGLO-AMERICAN FORCES WHICH WOULD SOON OCCUPY THE WESTERN SECTORS OF BERLIN. THE SOVIETS HAVE SOMETIMES CONSTRUCTED THE ARGUMENT THAT THE WESTERN ALLIES' PRESENCE IN BERLIN AROSE FROM THIS LOGISTICAL AGREEMENT AMONG MILITARY OFFICERS RATHER THAN FROM THE RIGHTS WON BY VICTORY AND THE UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER OF GERMANY.

2. ON THE OTHER HAND, GROMYKO MAY HAVE BEEN REFERRING TO SOME OF THE TERRITORIAL ADJUSTMENTS WHICH WERE MADE ON THE EDGES OF BERLIN IN THE YEARS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE WAR. BEST KNOWN IS THE EXCHANGE OF GATOW AND STAAKEN AIRFIELDS. THE BIG THREE AGREED AT POTSDAM IN 1945 THAT THE BRITISH SECTOR OF BERLIN SHOULD INCLUDE AN AIRFIELD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 USBERL 01505 01 OF 02 231442Z

TOTALLY WITHIN ITS BOUNDARIES AND THAT SUITABLE TERRITORIAL ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE MADE. THE BRITISH WANTED THE LARGE AIRFIELD AT GATOW WHICH WAS PARTLY WITHIN THEIR SECTOR AND PARTLY WITHIN THE SOVIET ZONE OF GERMANY. ALREADY WITHIN THE BRITISH SECTOR WAS THE SMALL LANDING FIELD IN WEST STAAKEN. THE EXCHANGE OF TERRITORY WAS WORKED OUT AFTER THE POTSDAM CONFERENCE BY BRITISH AND SOVIET NEGOTIATORS IN BERLIN, WITH THE RESULT THAT THE PRESENT BOUNDARIES OF THE BRITISH SECTOR WERE ESTABLISHED TO INCLUDE GATOW AIRFIELD IN EXCHANGE FOR WEST STAAKEN WHICH WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE SOVIET ZONE (NOW THE GDR).

3. WHAT IS LESS KNOWN ABOUT THIS AGREEMENT HAD TO DO WITH THE LATRINES AT THE GERMAN BARRACKS WHICH WERE ADJACENT TO GATOW AIRFIELD WHICH THE BRITISH OCCUPIED ON THEIR ARRIVAL IN BERLIN. IT TURNED OUT THE BARRACKS THEMSELVES WERE WITHIN THE BORDERS OF GREATER BERLIN AS DEFINED BY THE 1920 LAW, BUT THE LATRINES SERVING THESE BARRACKS WERE IN THE SOVIET ZONE. WHEN THE BRITISH WANTED TO INCLUDE IN THE AIRFIELD AGREEMENT A PRACTICAL ADJUSTMENT OF BOUNDARIES TO INCLUDE THE LATRINES WITHIN THE BRITISH SECTOR, THE SOVIET NEGOTIATOR BALKED; HE

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PAGE 01 USBERL 01505 02 OF 02 231448Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 USBERLIN 1505

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HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS FROM MOSCOW. THE HAGGLING WENT ON
FOR SOME DAYS AND THREATENED TO HOLD UP THE OVERALL
TERRITORIAL EXCHANGE. THE PROBLEM WAS EVENTUALLY SOLVED
BY APPENDING TO THE AGREEMENT A MAP OF THE AREA CONCERNED.
ONE SHOWED A LINE MARKED "BOUNDARY OF THE BRITISH SECTOR
OF BERLIN," WHICH ENCOMPASSED THE LATRINES. THE OTHER
LINE RUNNING BETWEEN THE BARRACKS AND THE LATRINES WAS
MARKED "BOUNDARY OF THE SOVIET ZONE OF GERMANY." THUS
THE SOVIETS WERE ABLE TO STICK TO THEIR POSITION
THEY WERE MERELY TO IMPLEMENT AGREEMENTS MADE AT
POTSDAM AND THE BRITISH WERE ABLE TO SATISFY A PRACTICAL
PROBLEM. (TODAY THE SECTOR BORDER FOLLOWS THE LINE
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PAGE 02 USBERL 01505 02 OF 02 231448Z

DRAWN BY THE BRITISH.) WHETHER GROMYKO WAS REFERRING TO THIS ARRANGEMENT OR NOT WE CANNOT BE SURE, BUT IT DOES RECALL AN INSTANCE WHERE FLEXIBILITY HAS BEEN POSSIBLE IN SEEMINGLY UNRESOLVABLE BOUNDARY DISPUTES.

4. THE ONLY OTHER TERRITORIAL MATTER WE CAN RECALL ALSO INVOLVED AIRFIELDS. WHEN THE FRENCH TOOK OVER THE TWO NORTHERN DISTRICTS OF THE BRITISH SECTOR IN 1945, THERE WAS NO AIRFIELD THERE. TEGEL WAS A LARGE TRAINING AREA FOR TANKS AND MOTORIZED VEHICLES. THE FRENCH MADE AN AGREEMENT TO TAKE OVER A PORTION OF THE SOVIET ZONE BETWEEN THE TWO OF FROHNAU IN THE FRENCH SECTOR AND THE VILLAGE OF STOLPE TO THE NORTHWEST IN THE SOVIET ZONE. THIS AREA WAS ADMINISTERED BY FRENCH SECTOR AUTHORITIES FROM THE SUMMER OF '45 UNTIL THE SUMMER OF '48, WHEN SOVIET TROOPS REOCCUPIED THE AREA. AT THE TIME THE CONSTRUCTION OF TEGEL AIRPORT AS AN ADDITIONAL AIRLIFT AIRFIELD HAD BEGUN. THE SOVIETS CLAIMED THAT AS AN AIRPORT WAS BEING BUILT WITHIN THE FRENCH SECTOR, THE FRENCH NO LONGER NEEDED PART OF THE SOVIET ZONE, BUT WHAT REALLY PROVOKED THE SOVIETS WAS THE ACTION OF THE FRENCH COMMANDANT IN DISPOSING OF THE TRANSMISSION MAST OF RADIO BERLIN. THE SOVIETS HAD GAINED CONTROL OF RADIO BERLIN FACILITIES, WHICH WERE IN THEIR SECTOR, IN 1945 AND WERE USING IT TO PUT OUT EXTREMELY HARSH PROPAGANDA. THE RADIO MAST, HOWEVER, WAS LOCATED IN THE FRENCH SECTOR ON WHAT WERE TO BE THE APPROACH PATHS OF TEGEL AIRPORT. THE FRENCH COMMANDANT HAD THE MAST REMOVED WITH EXPLOSIVES. WHEN ASKED THE NEXT DAY BY THE SOVIET COMMANDANT HOW HE COULD DO SUCH A THING, THE FRENCHMAN COOLLY REPLIED, "WITH DYNAMITE, MY DEAR GENERAL, WITH DYNAMITE." THIS SORT OF METHOD OF DEALING WITH THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT SEEM TO BE WHAT GROMYKO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 USBERL 01505 02 OF 02 231448Z

HAD IN MIND. GEORGE

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